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AUTHOR Loheyde, Katherine Jones
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ABSTRACT

Teacher certification may depend on 30 credits of collegiate work beyond the baccalaureate degree or the receipt of a Master's degree. Some state education departments, however, are accepting "inservice" credit in lieu of academic credit. "Inservice" training consists of workshops, courses, or programs designed to improve the quality of public education and is usually offered for no credit. The amassing of inservice, nonacademic credits to meet certification requirements is creating two systems with substantial differences in quality. Colleges and universities are faced with the need to offer varied innovative programs for academic credit in off-campus settings. In planning these programs, college officials should consider: 1) state cooperation for transferring of credits for a degree or certification: 2) time, travel, and expense (convenience) factors for teacher attendance and participation: and 3) quality of staff, enrollees, and courses. (CJ)

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# OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS LEADING TO PERMANENT TEACHER CERTIFICATION INSERVICE VS. UNIVERSITY CREDIT--WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

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Katherine Jones Loheyde
Assistant Dean
School of Education
University of Connecticut
Storrs, Connecticut 06268

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OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS LEADING TO PERMANENT TEACHER CERTIFICATION
INSERVICE VS. UNIVERSITY CREDIT—WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The past several years have seen a continually increasing interest throughout the nation in the expansion and improvement of development programs for professional staff at all levels. Such development programs—referred to "faculty development" at the college level—are designed to provide teachers and administrators with opportunities for professional and in some cases, personal, growth.

In public school systems across the country these programs have traditionally been referred to as "inservice" training, to distinquish them from "pre-service" training—that which is teacher preparatory. Inservice programs in themselves are not new. What is increasing by changing however, is the use of these programs by the teachers and state accreditation agencies. It is this latter use which is addressed in part here.

Parallel ladders to permanent or standard teacher certification exist in several states. On one hand, such certification may depend on 30 credits of collegiate work beyond the baccalaureate degree, or the receipt of a Master's degree. On the other, state education departments in some states are accepting "in-service" credit in lieu of academic credit to fulfill the thirty credit requirement. "Inservice work" in general is defined as workshops, courses or programs designed to improve the quality of public education which are offered for no credit or other than college credit.

In Connecticut, for example, teachers who have taught for three years may qualify for permanent certification by amassing the thirty credit hours, graduate or undergraduate, beyond the baccalaureate degree whether or not the credits lead to a masters. The second option, however, allows that teacher to

complete an individual program which is mutually determined or approved by the teacher and a supervisory authority. This individual program may include course work taken under the auspices of approved institutions of higher education and may include inservice activities sponsored by town or regional boards of education or approved private schools. This must be arranged with the approval of the Joint Teacher Education Committee of the Board of Higher Education and the State Board of Education in Connecticut.

The amassing of inservice—but not academic—credits to meet certification requirements is leading to a dual system with a substantial quality difference in the criteria for each system. Yet the traditional master's program as offered on campus is accused of not meeting the needs of the classroom teacher.

The attraction of the inservice route to practicing teachers is obvious: it's easy, generally inexpensive, and less time consuming than college or university courses, especially graduate courses. In addition, the inservice program is generally offered in the school at a time convenient to teachers. In many cases, teachers are released from regular classroom duties for these developmental programs.

Relevant to those of us in higher education is the loss of these potential students on the one hand as well as the very real possibility of low standards of excellence or shoddy pedagogical theory offered to America's teachers in the guise of inservice on the other. Doubly problemic is that teachers can receive lifetime certification on the basis of amassing thirty credits from such activities.

To face this growing problem, colleges and universities are faced with the need to offer varied innovative programs for academic credit in off-campus settings. The issues which must be considered in establishing and

administering such programs are equally varied: some of those issues of particular concern to college administrators in the creation of off-campus credit programs for this particular audience are addressed here.

Foremost among the concerns raised by the inservice methods of obtaining "credit"—but not academic credit—is the ability to transfer those credits to graduate programs. Teachers, teacher organizations, and school districts are pressing for graduate credit to be attached to many of these improvement-oriented inservice activities. Issues to be addressed before considering the transfer of inservice credit relate directly to the quality question. These include the following: who will teach the course or activity, i.e., could it conceivably be considered a graduate level course; who determines the number of credits which should be awarded, and for which, if any, graduate programs such credits would be accepted.

The easy answer, of course, is for colleges to offer appropriate courses in public school settings which are of interest or necessity to teachers. As this option has been available and still is, it, in its simplicity, begs the question we're confronting here.

To again use Connecticut as an example, we find the following:

(1) inservice is available to all who teach; there is no criteria for "admission" other than employment as a teacher. In fact, in some cases, paraprofessionals are invited to participate in inservice programs. While this makes sense in terms of faculty development, the idea of equating the work done or activity participated in as "graduate" seems a misnomer. However, in those cases in which a superintendent has approved the program, the teacher can use these credits toward permanent certification.

(2) The State Department of Education in Connecticut gives the responsibility for submission of proposals for in-service activities to the local education agency. While consultative sources such as college or university faculty may be used, local school personnel may devise, propose, and teach the inservice program.

The problem for the university then becomes whether we can accept the workshop on teaching reading offered by the local reading teacher as valid for graduate credit.

(3) While public school personnel offering courses to their peers is one level, the problem of staffing exists at another level also. Theoretically any agency or institute can provide inservice coursework. While it may appear logical that this would be the province of colleges of education, this has not necessarily been the case. For example, in at least one case a state education department grant for provision of inservice programs went to a two year community college. The college could never be approved for pre-service education of teachers nor had they the specialized staff to address problems of education and learning. Their grant-writing skills, however, were instrumental in procuring the funds and the community college staffs were providing in-service coursework for teachers. Even if academic credit were attached to such activity, it could only be at the introductory level as that is all that exists in a two year school. On occasion teachers do try, however, to use the "experience" for credit when they later apply for master's degree programs.

(4) The question of content and level persists. In Connecticut, the choice of content clearly comes from the school; level is often dependent on that content, but usually appears to be similar to that of an undergraduate program.

For example, the following are included in in-service activities approved by the Joint Teacher Education Committee to date. They are listed here with a short description written by the person originating the activity.

(1) Metrics — The participants will develop competencies and materials for using and teaching the metric system.

(2) Curriculum Practicum — The participants will develop skill in planning and preparation of lessons and materials for the criterion referenced instructional design.

(3) Environment and Education — Participants will develop an environmental curriculum for interdisciplinary use, through extensive experience in the field and in the classroom with environmental concepts and ecology.

(4) Education of the Self — This course is designed to provide educators with developmental experiences in personal psychological areas in order to help them understand and cope with themselves and others. A major intended outcome is a more humane environment for educator-pupil interaction.

While these topics and the others offered are both of interest and use to public school personnel, the issue of their comparison with graduate coursework remains. It must be noted, of course, that in many cases, there is no intent on the part of the school district or the originators that these activities be equivalent to graduate work. However, teachers and teacher organizations are now asking for these programs to be accepted by universities as fulfilling some portion of a graduate program.

(5) The whole question of credit—without regard to the undergraduate-graduate issue—remains unaddressed, even by those in state education departments who accept inservice credits for permanent certification. The variation between activities is often profound. In an inservice course called "The Exceptional Child in the Regular Classroom," 44 hours yeilded three inservice activity credits. In another, the "Curriculum Practicum" mentioned above, 10 hours of formal instruction is combined with 35 hours of practical application for three credits. "Education of the Self" gives three credits for 45 total hours of inservice activity.

It is apparent that even if colleges and universities were prepared to accept inservice credit, evaluation of what those credits meant would be difficult.

Furthermore, the question remains as to how many credits could be applied to a degree program. Surely thirty in-service credits would not be transferable into a master's program. In addition, into which degree or certification programs would such credits be accepted? Could a teacher apply 9 credits of inservice work toward a masters but not toward a doctorate? Should such credits apply only to certificates which relate to public schools—like the sixth year administrator's certificate offered in some states—but not to degree programs at all?

(6) Directly related to the question of quality control is the evaluation of those engaged in the inservice activity. To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever flunked

"Inservice 101." Many activities award credit on the basis of attendence and participation. Grades may or may not be given at all, and what is graded varies from program to program.

If we do wish to accept inservice work for transfer credit into graduate degree programs, several criteria must be met to insure quality control:

(1) Higher education resources, specifically the four year colleges and universities, should be used to provide inservice activities planned in conjunction with and requested by teachers, teacher organizations, and local school districts.

(2) The dean or director of teacher education in the colleges or university which offers the course should indicate that all procedures necessary to guarantee quality control have been met for the inservice activity in the same way that such quality controls are applied to regular graduate courses.

(3) Criteria to be considered in such quality control include qualification of faculty; faculty appointment procedures; payment of the faculty member; grading criteria; and the approval of the course, its content and its level.

(4) It should be clear to participants in college-sponsored inservice activity whether that course, even if offered for graduate credit, would be accepted as graduate <u>degree</u> credit.

Beyond this, several other issues of administrative concern must be addressed. Briefly, these include:

(1) preparation on the part of faculty—as the specific expertise required to address a particular question on the part of teachers may mean new skills for the faculty member as well;

(2) changes in the traditional reward system—travel to off-campus sites is a big time commitment in itself; conflicts with total course, committee, and advisee load must be addressed as well as the relation to service and research required for tenure;

(3) collaboration with school districts on planning and programming—it's quite possible that the perceived needs of a group of teachers may well clash with the needs of those teachers as perceived by college and university faculty;

(4 coordination of what may be unique financial arrangements—rather than each teacher paying by the credit, for example, maybe schools would contract with the university by the course. Federal and state funds are also frequently used for inservice activities.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the college or university must assume a role of vigorous leadership and effective coordination of programs used for certification credits in keeping with the service capacity of the institution. Communication lines must be established and maintained which will eliminate the towngown or ivory tower elitist image of university educators. We may be called upon to organize and formalize new inter-agency administrative units to work with school personnel on a collegial basis. Whatever the means, we in higher education must be concerned with the quality issue as it relates to inservice credit and the permanent certification of the nation's teachers.